

FURTHER OBSERVATIONS AND RECORDS FOR BUTTERFLIES (LEPIDOPTERA) IN NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

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Abstract

Euploea netscheri Snellen and *Prosotas gracilis* (Rober) are recorded within Australian limits in Torres Strait for the first time. The female of *Charaxes latona* Butler from Iron Range is illustrated and range extensions are given for *Taractrocera ina* Waterhouse and *Nacaduba calauria calauria* (Felder). New foodplants are recorded for *Neohesperilla crocea* (Miskin), *Euploea alcatheae monilifera* (Moore) and *Neopithecops lucifer heria* (Fruhstorfer).

Introduction

Since 1989 the authors have been undertaking a biological survey of the butterfly fauna of northern Australia and interesting discoveries have been reported previously (Valentine and Johnson 1992, Johnson 1993, Johnson *et al.* 1994, 1995). This paper reports new records, information or range extensions for eight species of butterflies in northern Australia.

HESPERIIDAE

Neohesperilla crocea (Miskin)

At Heathlands on Cape York Peninsula adult females were commonly observed ovipositing on the prostrate grass *Schizachyrium pachyarthron* C.A. Gardner (Poaceae) and early instar larvae readily established shelters and fed on the plant. Rearing of larvae to maturity was not attempted.

Taractrocera ina Waterhouse

Two males collected at Kalumburu in March 1990 and another from the Mitchell Plateau (14°36'S 125°47'E) in April 1995 are the first records of this species from Western Australia. Previously it was known as far west as the Daly River in the Northern Territory (Common and Waterhouse 1981).

NYMPHALIDAE

Euploea alcatheae monilifera (Moore)

Adults were common on Saibai and Dauan Islands in Torres Strait in April 1994 and May 1995. Two adults were reared from large silver pupae collected from the introduced *Nerium oleander* (Apocynaceae) on Dauan Island.

Euploea netscheri Snellen

A male (Figs 1, 2) collected on Dauan Island, Torres Strait in May 1995 is the first record of this species within Australian limits. It is superficially similar to males of *E. alcatheae*, *E. algea* and *E. sylvester* with which it was flying. It can be separated by the narrower fore wings, the pale margins of the wings and the large single sex brand located apically in the expanded cell CuA₂ (Ackery and Vane-Wright 1984).

Charaxes latona Butler

This species has been collected regularly at Iron Range since it was first recorded in 1978 (Johnson and De Baar 1980), but only the male has been known previously from Australia. During 1995 and 1996 numerous females were observed and several were captured.

The female (Figs 3, 4) is larger than the male and on the upperside the fore wing terminal band is broken into discrete spots. On the hind wing the small white spots on the terminal band extend from the tornus to the apex and the tail is slightly spatulate. On the underside the ground colour is ochre with prominent purplish subterminal and submedian bands.

A female collected in December 1995 was confined for 10 days on *Cryptocarya triplinervis* (Lauraceae) and *Celtis paniculata* (Ulmaceae) in Townsville but failed to oviposit. On dissection the abdomen contained 51 eggs.

LYCAENIDAE

Nacaduba calauria calauria (Felder)

Reported previously from Murray Island (Johnson *et al.* 1994), a single male collected on Dauan Island in April 1994 extends the distribution of the species within Torres Strait. A female from Murray Island previously identified as *Nacaduba* sp. nr *mioswara* by Lambkin and Knight (1990) has been examined by us and is *N. c. calauria*.

Prosotas gracilis (Rober)

A pair (Figs 5-8) collected on Dauan Island, Torres Strait in April 1994 is the first record of this species within Australian limits. They were feeding at blossom of *Pongamia pinnata* (Fabaceae) in company with *Anthene seltuttus* and *Arhopala* spp.. Elsewhere it occurs from Sumatra eastwards to West Irian and Papua New Guinea (Tite 1963). The Australian specimens appear closest to the nominotypical race and can be distinguished from *P. nora* by the larger size, lack of hindwing tails, broader bands and distinctive brown underside. In the male genitalia the valvae are much broader than in other *Prosotas* spp.

Neopithecops lucifer heria (Fruhstorfer)

Several adults were reared from larvae feeding on *Glycosmis trifoliata* (Blume) Spreng (Rutaceae) on Darnley Island in May 1995. The larvae fed on juvenile foliage of plants growing in deep shade in rainforest on the island.

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Figs 1-8. (1-2) *Euploea netscheri*, Dauan Island: (1) upperside, (2) underside. (3-4) *Charaxes latona* female: (3) upperside, (4) underside. (5-8) *Prosotas gracilis*, Dauan Island: (5) male upperside, (6) male underside, (7) female upperside, (8) female underside. Forewing lengths (1-2) 41mm; (3-4) 49mm; (5-8) 15mm.

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